(b) if so, the response of Pakistan thereto; and

(c) the number of Indian media persons (both print and electronic) who have been issued visa?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The question of grant of visa to Indian journalists to cover developments in Afghanistan was taken up with Government of Pakistan at various levels including by our High Commissioner in Islamabad with the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

(b) and (c) As per information available with Government, no Indian journalist (holding Indian passport) was issued visa by Government of Pakistan after 11th Septembe, 2001.

Special Social Security Schemes for Retrenched Workers

* 166. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have evolved specially designed scheme for retrenched workers from various sectors till they get alternative employment;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by Government to prepare special social security schemes for such retrenched workers?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Pursuant to the announcement made in the Budget for the financial year 2001 -2002, the four nationalised General Insurance Companies i.e. (i) National Insurance Company Limited (ii) New India Assurance Company Limited (iii) Oriental Insurance Company Limited ; and (iv) United India Insurance Company Limited have finalised the Scheme of "Ashrya Bima Yojna" which has been launched with effect from 10th October, 2001 with a view to extend social security cover to workers adversely affected due to loss of jobs.

From the year 2001-2002 the Department of Public Enterprises have introduced the Scheme for counselling, re-training and re-deployment of rationalised employees of Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) with an objective to reorient these employees through short duration training programmes to encourage mem to avail of opportunities of self-employment after their separation from the Public Sector Enterprises due to Voluntary Retirement under (VRS) or retrenchment due to closure of the enterprise.

The feasibility of introducing an Insurance Scheme to protect the interest of retrenched workers is also being explored within the framework of the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

Promotion of Agro and Rural Industries

† * 167. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of various schemes of his Ministry for promoting Agro and Rural Industries in the country particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Jharkhand;

(b) the details of subsidies being extended by government under various head; and

(c) the steps taken to promote rural industries in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand in future?

THE MINISTER OF AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRI KARIYA MUNDA): (a) The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is implementing its programmes/schemes in all the States of the country including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Under the Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) of the KVIC, rural industries upto a project cost of Rs. 25 lakhs are being set up.

(b) Under the REGP 25% of the project cost upto Rs. 10 lakhs and an additional 10% of the project cost above Rs. 10 lakhs upto Rs.25 lakhs is provided as margin money, which is in the form of a back ended subsidy. For weaker sections the margin money is higher at 30% of the project cost upto Rs. 10 lakhs.

(c) For the promotion of Village Industries in the country including Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, the REGP will continue to operate in the 10th Plan period on a higher scale.

Committee to Monitoring of IT and Software Industries

* 168. SHRI P.N. SIVA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have constituted any High Level committee to monitor and guide the software and I.T. industries in the country;

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.